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The United States has a moral obligation and a vital national interest in helping the people of Iraq to achieve a more stable, secure, and prosperous future. The political compromises necessary to achieve such a future remain elusive. The two probable outcomes, an authoritarian or a flaccid Iraqi government, will not satisfy the interests of the people living in Iraq nor the other states in the region. More importantly, it is unlikely to produce a degree of stability and territorial control that is "good enough" to satisfy U.S. interests.

This paper proposes a different strategy. First, it will address the two myths that prevent serious discussion of the question: Kurdish irredentism and Shi'a hegemony. Next, it will look at how the events leading up to the creation of Iraq produced its current, unstable form. Then it will consider probable outcomes and U.S. interests in the region. Finally, it will make recommendations for a strategy that supports the eventual disintegration of Iraq into more stable, and politically viable, elements that are less susceptible to outside influence and more satisfying for the people of Iraq, the United States, and regional partners, while further isolating the U.S. adversaries of Syria and Iran.

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MOVING FORWARD:
U.S. Interest and Facilitating the Probable in Iraq

An Advanced Research Project prepared By:

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MOVING FORWARD:
US Interest and Facilitating the Probable in Iraq

ABSTRACT

The United States has a moral obligation and a vital national interest in helping the people of Iraq to achieve a more stable, secure, and prosperous future. The political compromises necessary to achieve such a future remain elusive. The two probable outcomes, an authoritarian or a flaccid Iraqi government, will not satisfy the interests of the people living in Iraq nor the other states in the region. More importantly, it is unlikely to produce a degree of stability and territorial control that is "good enough" to satisfy US interests.

This paper will discuss a strategy that accepts a different outcome: the possibility of allowing Iraq to disintegrate into more stable, and thus politically viable, elements. First, it will address the two myths that prevent serious discussion of the question: Kurdish irredentism and Shi'a hegemony. Next, it will look at how the events surrounding the First World War led to the creation of Iraq in its current, unstable form. Then it will consider probable outcomes and broad US interests in the region. Finally, it will make specific recommendations for a strategy that supports eventual Kurdish independence in northern Iraq and an Arab state in southern Iraq. Both would be inherently more stable and less susceptible to outside influence. It would satisfy the interests of the people of Iraq, the United States, and regional partners, while further isolating the US adversaries of Syria and Iran.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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Lieutenant Colonel Martin A. Perryman was the 2007 Senior US Army Fellow assigned to the George C. Marshall Center, Garmisch, Germany.

Lieutenant Colonel Perryman was born in Dallas, Texas. He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant of Armor in 1986 and graduated from Texas A&M University in 1988 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History. He also holds a Master of Arts degree in National Security Affairs from the Naval Postgraduate School and is currently studying with the US Army War College. He is married to Christina van Doorninck and has two children, Matthew and Catherine.

Lieutenant Colonel Perryman's time as a Company Grade Officer was spent in various tank battalions and division cavalry squadrons. He served in 3-64 Armor in Schweinfurt, Germany, 2/1 Cavalry in Fort Polk, Louisiana, and 1/10 Cavalry in Fort Hood, Texas. He commanded both Alpha and Headquarters and Headquarters Troop while in 1/10 CAV.

Lieutenant Colonel Perryman is now a Foreign Area Officer. He attended the Turkish War College in Istanbul, Turkey and served as the Executive Officer for the Office of Defense Cooperation in Ankara, Turkey. He served three years as an Arabian Gulf Regional Desk Officer at US Central Command from 2000-2003 and was the Chief of the Regional Operations Branch and the Central Command Desk Officer while serving on the Army Staff in the G-3/5/7 War Plans Division from 2005-2007.

He is currently serving as the Chief of the Office of Defense Cooperation in Tirana, Albania, since the beginning of summer 2008.

MAPS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> Whatever the cause, wars always seek to reorganize or preserve some current unstable or threatened organization of power. Decisions to go to war, then, always entail commitments to a more just and ordered reorganization of the political system. In other words, decisions for war result from the judgment that the current organization of international power must be changed … and that war is an apt instrument for that change.
>
> -Dr. Joseph Capizzi, Ph.D. 2008[1]

The theory of Just War, as it has evolved over the past fifteen hundred years, assists a country's leaders in evaluating the validity of the decision to go to war by connecting the use of the military to political goals. It recognizes and provides a framework for the application of the oft quoted dictum of Carl von Clausewitz that "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means."[2] This, in effect, subordinates warfare and places it in the service of political objectives. The theory provides a rubric not only for assessing the decision to go to war, but also a way to consider its execution and to evaluate its outcome. In this context then, there is an expectation that a successful end will produce a result that is more advantageous than the condition that led to hostilities.[3]

The decision to expel Saddam Hussein from Kuwait in 1991 narrowly applied this concept by employing limited military operations to achieve the restoration of pre-invasion conditions. Broad domestic and international factors contributed to the decision to pursue this limited objective. Many lauded the "success" of this military operation. However, politics required more than the military achieved. The status quo ante did not produce a satisfying political improvement over the pre-hostility condition. Thus, over the next decade, the United

[1] Joseph Caprizzi and Kim R. Holmes, "Just War and Endgame Objectives in Iraq," *Heritage Lectures* 1081 (Washington DC: The Heritage Foundation, 12 May 2008): 2.
[2] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, eds. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976) 87.
[3] Caprizzi, 3.

States supported Kurdish and Shi'a Arab uprisings against the Iraqi government, removed huge swaths of territory from Iraqi government control with the northern and southern "No-Fly" Zones, and engaged in seemingly endless efforts to coerce an improved political reality through United Nations (UN) sanctions and inspection regimes. Saddam Hussein, only concerned with regime survival, was incapable of accepting the risks required to comply with international will and reintegrate into the family of nations. This impasse, spurred on by the September 11 attacks and the Global War on Terror, ultimately led to the United States and Coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003. With the military removal of Saddam Hussein as its objective, the United States accepted the moral and political commitment it avoided in 1991: to ensure an outcome of a more just and stable organization of power than previously existed.[4]

In addition to meeting this moral and political commitment, it is imperative to constantly ask the most relevant foreign policy question; simply, "What is in the best interest of the United States?" A satisfactory answer to that question must address fluctuating domestic, regional, and broader international concerns. In the case of Iraq, there is a high degree of compatibility between interest and obligation. United States interests include ensuring the free flow of oil; supporting our friends and allies; increasing regional stability; and deepening western-oriented free-market economic development. All of these interests will be furthered by meeting obligations to improve the conditions in the territory of Iraq.

Thus far, as the US occupation enters its seventh year, this effort remains unsuccessful. Though violence is down, the political compromises necessary to create an improved environment remain elusive. Regardless of how one interprets the current situation, it is difficult to refute that the situation in Iraq is tenuous. Iraq currently ranks second, trailing only Sudan, on

[4] Caprizzi, 4.

the Foreign Policy Index of Failed States.[5] It also ranks second, behind Afghanistan, on the Peace and Conflict Instability Ledger.[6] These are not indicators of success nor are they easily dismissed. Such data suggests that Iraq is not a troubled country moving in a positive direction, but rather, a country at the very bottom with small hope for improvement.

Even the most optimistic sources note that the situation in Iraq is and remains fragile. The United States can provide security, which is important, but only the Iraqis can generate the political compromise vital to achieve a more stable Iraq. Sectarian interests undermine this effort. Lack of political will and endemic corruption at every level of society, but particularly within the Ministries, deter progress. Thus far, not a single piece of significant political compromise legislation has been both enacted and implemented. Overall, Iraq is not moving in a direction advantageous to the Unites States.

This does not bode well. With the exception of the Partition Plan proposed by Senator Biden, there appears to be no serious discussion about how the United States might adjust its strategic ends to create an achievable strategy.[7] This is unfortunate, because it is in the best interest of the United States to broaden the strategic discussion. If interests and obligations truly define the strategic requirement, then the wise statesman should consider all options, to include the option of also adjusting the ends. By doing so, the discussion can move toward a more realistic analysis of the probable.

When considering what is probable, it is difficult to envision a realistic scenario in which a government emerges in the territory of Iraq that is stable, representational, and capable of

[5] "Failed States Index 2007," *Foreign Policy*. http://www.foreignpolicy.com. Accessed on 23 April 2008.
[6] Joseph J. Hewitt, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, and Ted Robert Gurr, *Peace and Conflict 2008: Executive Summary*, (College Park, MD: University of Maryland Center for International Development and Conflict Management, 2008) 5.
[7] Joseph R. Biden, "The Biden Plan," http://biden.senate.gov/issues/issue/?id=5ed09498-9d5c-42c2-b157-6882c3180186. Accessed on 18 April 2008.

controlling its territory. For Iraq to remain intact, it is far more probable that another strongman will emerge from one of the many competing groups in Iraq and form a strong, authoritarian government that controls the territory through repression. This model, followed since Iraq was formed following World War I, provides the most viable solution.

Herein lies the key to the problem. Iraq, by design, is a weak, unstable entity, created by the League of Nations mandate system to be controlled through a strongman who is dependent upon external support. This structure and method, though unsavory, proved effective until the end of the Cold War. Today, globalization and interdependency have increased the permeability of national boarders. Iraq can no longer be addressed in isolation but must be considered regionally and internationally. There are too many external factors that can influence the model, and thus it becomes suspect. Even if the United States chooses to follow this model and supports the ascendancy of a strongman, the end result is likely to be much less effective than required. Simply put, success on the current path is unlikely and even if achieved, the results will probably be inadequate.

Therefore, a reassessment is in order. The recent US Presidential transition will create a window of strategic opportunity in which the United States can alter its course in Iraq. This requires a clear-eyed evaluation of both the region and what is really in the interest of the United States. This must be coupled with the intellectual honesty to follow that assessment to a logical conclusion, and the willingness to focus on solutions that provide a long-term increase in security and stability for both the United States and the Middle East.

Such a solution must first and foremost satisfy US interests and obligations. Concurrently, it must satisfy the American ideals of freedom, democracy, and free-market economics, and the needs of the people who live within the geography of Iraq to set their own

course, make their own decisions, and live consistently with their own traditions and cultural values. Finally, it must create a situation that will be acceptable to and ultimately beneficial for the US partners in the region.

CHAPTER 2: THE MYTH OF THE MONOLITHS

Before one can begin to transition from the land of the possible into the realm of the probable, it is necessary to establish a common framework. The interplay of history, culture, and religion on the region of Iraq weaves a complex tapestry that must be viewed from a distance to be appreciated. In this context, it is important to consider "truth" and the importance it plays in group identity, both for the people of the region desiring a solution and for the international community attempting to contribute to that solution. It helps to scope the world of the probable to identify viable options that in the long-run support US national interests.

It may be helpful to consider "truth" in two distinct senses: "truth-adequation" (i.e., "factual" truth) and "truth-disclosure" ("more-or-less" truth). The first sense, adequation, is an expression of the factually correct or incorrect: for example, a specific Iraqi policeman did or did not leave his post during fighting in Basra. The second sense of truth, disclosure, attempts to glean the cause of and motivation for the policeman's action. This answer can only contain more-or-less truth, as it is an attempt not to establish fact but to reveal the nature of the phenomenon.[8]

Factual truth may be important in courts of law, but it provides little in terms of explaining past events or predicting future outcomes. Individuals and groups do not directly internalize facts as truth. Knowledge and understanding of truth is produced within society through complex relationships over time through the process of truth-disclosure. This process helps to explain the often dramatic disconnects in version and interpretation by groups on different sides of an issue and leads to misunderstandings both within the region and within the international community.

[8] Tzvan Todorov, *The Morals of History*, trans. Alyson Waters (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 90.

This is applicable to the situation in Iraq. Commonly held beliefs have been internalized so strongly that they have taken on the mantel of indisputable fact and arbitrarily truncate discussion. One hears these beliefs articulated in various ways, but it comes down to two main issues. The first is a deeply held concern over potential Kurdish irredentism, and the second is the belief that because the Arab population of southern Iraq is predominately Shi'a, they are predisposed to become an Iranian surrogate. There are certainly some segments of the population that would support such outcomes, and would actively work toward their realization. However, evidence indicates that there has never been critical mass within the Kurdish and Arab communities to validate such concerns. Without critical mass, such outcomes, while possible, are not probable. Therefore, they should not be the drivers of US policy decisions.

First, consider the likelihood of Kurdish irredentism attempting to politically unite the entire region's Kurds from Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and Iran into a single country. The Kurds are difficult to define.[9] They are indistinguishable physically from other ethnic groups on the region. All of their traits and variations exist among any one of their ethnic neighbors.[10] Between 24 and 27 million people self-identify as Kurds and claim Kurdish ancestry[11] They do not share a common language, religion, or history.

They do share a common perception of their uniqueness, secure in their mountain homeland, with a romantic, nomadic past, free from outside domination.[12] It is this perception that has been promulgated throughout the international community as truth disclosure. It implies a monolithic degree of unity among the various, fractious Kurdish groups that does not appear to

[9] Hakan M. Yavuz, "A Preamble to the Kurdish Question: The Politics of Kurdish Identity," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 18, no. 1 (April 1998): 9-18.
[10] For the definitive work on Kurdish statistics and diversity see Mehrdad R. Izady, *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook*, (Washington DC: Taylor and Francis, Inc., 1992), 73.
[11] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1996), 3-5.
[12] Ibid., 3-5, McDowall dramatically illustrates the distinction between the myth and reality of life in historic and modern Kurdistan.

exist in reality beyond the shared use of the moniker "Kurd." A more accurate interpretation of truth adequation might lead to the conclusion that there is actually very little homogeneity in this population. There is no historical precedent for sustained cooperative action in an encompassing sense, and there is little chance that all of the various groups who self-identify as Kurds will every find it in their best interest to seek political union.

The Kurds are considered descendants of the Medes.[13] The first definite reference to the Kurds dates from 400 BC.[14] From at least that time, the Kurds have maintained a consistent ethnic identity in the mountainous region between present-day Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. It is that geography that has separated the Kurds into isolated groups. Their historic role has been to serve as a buffer between more powerful, organized, competing powers.[15] In this role, they have benefited from a high degree of semi-autonomy, but they have also been open to exploitation.[16] The one common characteristic among all of the various Kurdish groups has been their historic inability to unite. Subdivisions by language and tribe have historically been stronger forces than ethnicity for the Kurds.

There is no single Kurdish language, but rather two distinct families of dialects. One, Sorani, is heavily influenced by Arabic and Farsi, while the other, Kurmanji, is influenced by Turkish and Armenian. Though related, they are mutually unintelligible. The difference is comparable to English and German, which are both in the Germanic family of languages.[17] Language is the most significant barrier to the development of a cohesive Kurdish national identity.[18]

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[13] Izady, 23-74.
[14] Edgar O'Balance, *The Kurdish Revolt: 1961-1970*, (Hamden, CT: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1973) 1.
[15] McDowall. This is a recurring theme in Chapters 2-5.
[16] Richard Sim, "Kurdistan: The Search for Recognition," *Conflict Studies* 124 (November 1980), 19.
[17] J N Postgate, *Languages of Iraq: Ancient and Modern*, (Iraq: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 2007) 139.
[18] Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985*, (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992). Hassanpour examines language and nation building. In particular he looks at the efforts of

In addition to language barriers, political organization into tribe and tribal confederation has prevented Kurdish unity. Spread across the region, there are fifty-six confederations and 224 independent tribes. Some of these tribal entities consider themselves to be of great antiquity; identifying themselves with lineages older than those of the Kurdish people.[19] In application, all 380 of these political units have historically chosen local and tribal interests over ethnic interests.

Religion has also played a minor role in Kurdish disunity. The majority of the Kurds are Sunni Muslim, though they do not all adhere to the same Madhhab, or school of Islamic law and interpretation. There is also a large number of Shi'a Kurds, both twelver and sevener sects, predominately in Iran. The third largest group is the Alevis, who consider themselves to be Shi'a, but are not accepted as such by the larger Shi'a community.[20] Additionally, around 200,000 Yezidi Kurds practice an ancient angel cult unrelated to the modern, monotheistic religions. The smallest statistically significant group is the Yürsün, who follow a different angel cult from the Yezidi. Finally, there are a few Christian, Jew, and Druze enclaves of Kurds.[21]

The picture is much more complex than is implied by a single label such as "Kurd." The current concerns over Kurdish irredentism hinge on the assumption that one's ethnic identification dictates one's politics. For the region primarily populated by those who identify as Kurd, this assumption has consistently proven incorrect. There is no historical precedent to support it. Though a Kurdish identity has existed for centuries, a desire for pan-Kurdish autonomy has not.

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various Kurdish nationalists, beginning in the 18th Century, to standardize their particular tribal version of "Kurdish" as a critical unifying force for their movement. He focuses briefly on the PKK, they have been the most successful at standardizing, and disseminating a Kurdish dialect through their various media outlets. He also devotes considerable space to the efforts of the modern nation-states to use the language as a tool for assimilation. He clearly illustrates the magnitude of the linguistic barrier to Kurdish nationalism.

[19] Izady, 78-85.

[20] Ibid., 132-133.

[21] Ibid., 132-133.

Numerous "Kurdish" rebellions have never fully developed. This is the salient point; not the fact that rebellions occurred, but that they never came close to achieving critical mass. Each was limited in geographic scope and elicited little sympathy from the other Kurdish tribes. All uprisings were crushed.[22] One can extrapolate that while possible, it remains unlikely that an overwhelming wave of Kurdish irredentism will sweep the region as a result of any actions taken in northern Iraq.

Two examples from recent history serve to illustrate the point. The Soviets went so far as to establish a puppet Kurdistan inside Iran in 1946, which not only failed to generate pan-Kurdish enthusiasm but actually had the opposite effect.[23] Another example is the PKK, which arguably has come closer than any other Kurdish group to generating broad-based Kurdish support. While regional Kurdish entities, particularly the KDP and PUK in Iraq, did provide some support and safe haven to the PKK, they accounted for only a fraction of the total. The PKK never generated a broad-based following across the entire Kurdish region. Certainly this was not the goal of the PKK, who focused only on the Kurdish population in Turkey. This should be seen as recognition by those who identify as Kurds to the practical limitations to panethnic action in the region. In fact, the majority of the support for the PKK came from two sources: extortion of the Kurdish Diaspora in Europe, and non-Kurdish state actors, Russia, Greece, Syria, Iran, Iraq, and possibly Armenia, who saw the PKK as a potential lever against Turkey to advance other interests.[24]

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[22] Martin Van Bruinessen, "Shifting National and Ethnic Identities: The Kurds in Turkey and the European Diaspora," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 18, no. 1 (April 1998): 39.
[23] Hassan Arfa, *The Kurds: An Historical and Political Study*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968): 47-106. While much is written on the Soviets in Iran, this is the best look at the Republic of Kurdistan, including the Kurdish perspective. Arfa was the Chief of Staff of the Iranian Army from 1944-1946 and later the Ambassador to Turkey.
[24] Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997): 89-114, makes this case very convincingly.

The second belief that the predominately Shi'a population of southern Iraq is predisposed to become an Iranian surrogate is also suspect. Consider the likelihood of southern Iraq willingly subordinating itself to the political control of Iran. This concern is rooted in the notion that the Arabs of southern Iraq, who happen to be Shi'a, will consistently see their interests served by aligning with the Persians of Iran, who also happen to be Shi'a. In other words, alignment by religious sect will consistently trump other concerns, interests, and self-identifications.

Since the invasion of Iraq, Iran has continued to take advantage of political instability and porous borders to manipulate the environment in Iraq. It is in the interest of Iran to exert influence on Iraq and, if possible, to gain some degree of control over Iraqi internal affairs. There are also clearly some groups within Iraq who have decided that they can benefit from accepting Iranian support. While the Iranians most certainly are working toward establishing a long-term, influential relationship, it is not clear that this is the desire or intent of those living in Iraq. This is true even for those groups which are currently accepting aid from Iran. The most probable assessment is that these groups have determined it to be in their short-term political interest to make a tactical alliance with elements inside Iran. It appears to be a means to an end, an effort to leverage Iranian support to further their own position inside Iraq, and not a desire for a long-term alliance. This is consistent with the historical trend, which must be viewed in the context of the political spread of Islam and the impact of the Sunni – Shi'a schism, as well as the emergence of Arabs as a distinct ethnic group. Taken together, it appears that while Iranian domination of southern Iraq is certainly a possible outcome, there is little reason to believe that it is a probable outcome.

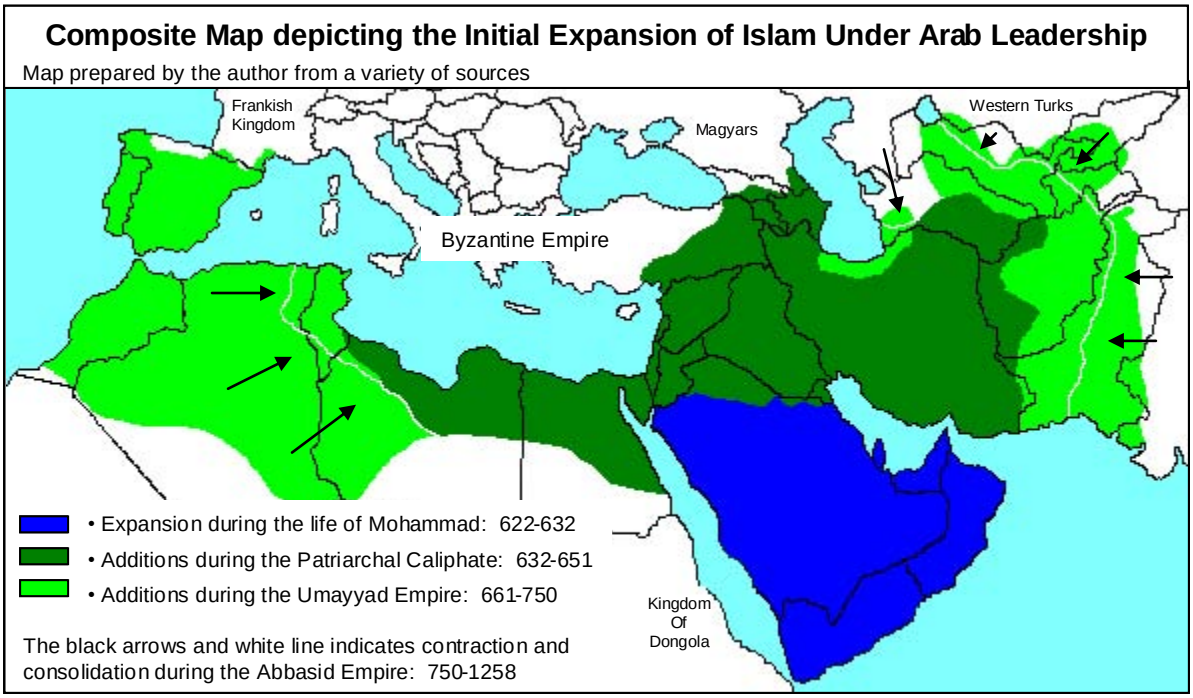
The Arabs see themselves as an ancient people who, like the Kurds, have lived in the region since antiquity. The inception of the Islamic faith occurred in Arab lands. As a result,

Arab identity has become intertwined with Muslim identity like the fibers of a rope. The inverse, contrastingly, does not appear to be true. All Muslims do not perceive a corresponding Arab identity.

Islam was introduced to the world by the historic figure of Abu I-Qasim Muhammad, who was born in Mecca, on the Arabian Peninsula, in 570 CE.[25] Muslims believe that he is the last and greatest in a series of prophets with a holy lineage familiar to all three major monotheistic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) from Adam through Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus.[26] He began to receive divine revelations through the Angel Gabriel in 610 CE, at the age of 40.[27] By the time of his death in 632 CE, Arab Muslims were in political control of most of the Arabian Peninsula.[28]

Following the death of Muhammad, a dispute arose over succession. This is the theological origin of the Sunni – Shi'a schism. One group, which would become the Shi'a, advocated the selection of the Caliph based on decent and relationship to the Prophet. The other group, which would become the Sunni, believed that the most appropriate successor should be chosen by consensus.[29] This theological split should not be marginalized. However, it is equally important to note that in addition to the theological element, there have always been strong political and ethnic elements. In application, political and ethnic considerations have consistently taken precedent and dominated group decision making.

[25] Elizabeth Goldman, *Believers: Spiritual Leaders of the World*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1995) 63.
[26] John Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2002.) 4-5.
[27] Ira M. Lapidus, A History of Islamic Societies, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 21-23.
[28] Ibid., 33.
[29] *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, v.1 2004 p 116-123.



Map 1: Initial Islamic Expansion

Such was the case during the twenty-nine year period immediately following the death of Mohammed. Islam experienced rapid political and territorial expansion from Tripoli in North Africa to Herat in Iran between 632 CE and 661 CE. This rapid expansion was carried out by Arab armies under Arab leaders who were chosen from the Companions of the Prophet in succession: Abu Bakr (632-634 CE); Umar ibn al-Khattab (634-644 CE); Uthman ibn Affan (644-654 CE); and Ali ibn Abi Talib (656-661 CE).[30] As a result of the dispute over succession, Sunnis recognize them as the first four Caliphs and refer to them as the Rightly Guided. Shi'a, on the other hand, consider the first three to be usurpers and contend that Ali, the last of the four, was and is the rightful claimant to authority following the Prophet.[31] However, it should not be

[30] Bertold Spuler, *The Age of the Caliphs: History of the Muslim World*, trans. F.R.C. Bagley, (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995) 18-34.
[31] John Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 36.

forgotten that at the time, there were disputes but no break among the Arab faithful over this issue. Ethnic political cohesion survived its first test of theological difference.

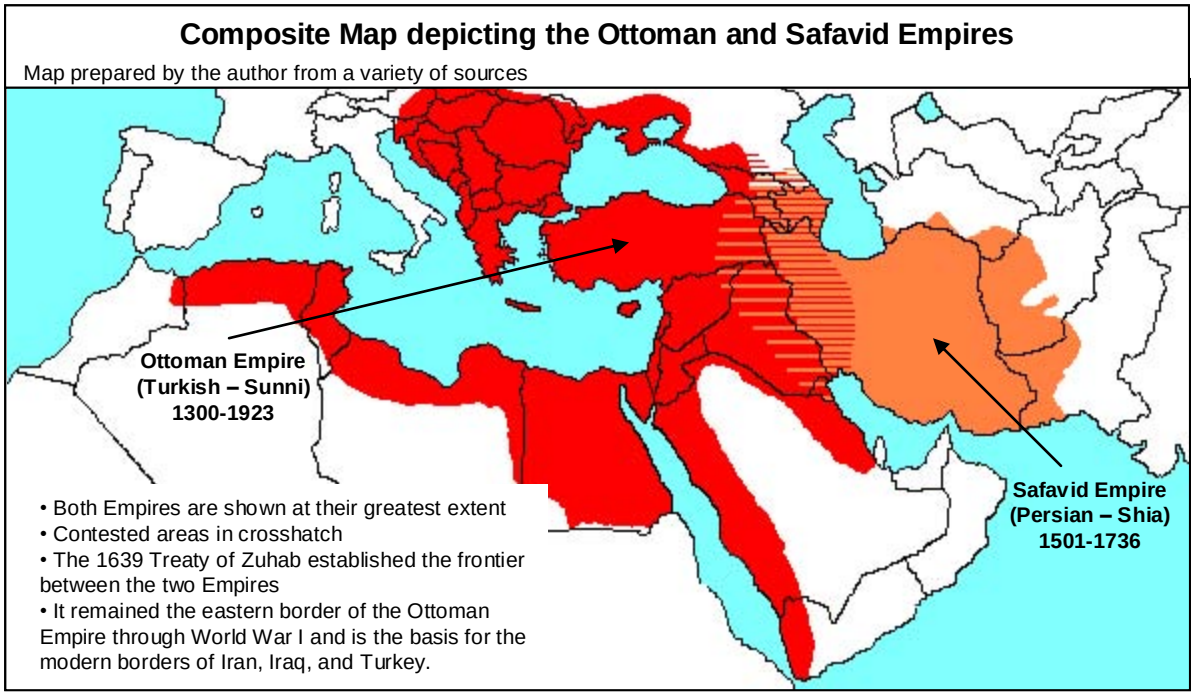
Following the death of Ali in 661 CE, Caliph Muawiyah I ascended to power. He instituted dynastic succession and thus inaugurated the Umayyad Empire.[32] Sunnis consider him related to the Prophet, while Shi'a dispute this claim. By ensuring that power would transfer to his son upon his death, he altered the basic power structure and eliminated the possibility of having a candidate acceptable to the Shi'a ascend to the Caliph. As a result, the Shi'a never fully accepted Umayyad authority. Conflict and internal power struggles marked the entire period. Nevertheless, the Imperial core remained predominately Arab, enforcing the official use of Arabic and issuing coinage as part of a deliberate policy of Arab assimilation. Over the next century, the Islamic Caliphate enjoyed frequent military success and rapid political expansion. By 750 CE, the empire stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indus River. [33]

Such rapid expansion brought vast numbers of non-Arabs into the Empire, shifting demographics and setting conditions for political instability.[34] In 750 CE, the Abbasids took advantage of those conditions and overthrew the Umayyads. The Abbasids claimed legitimacy through their Hashemite descent from the Prophet, and used it to bolster their credentials and secure Arab Shi'a support. In addition, they drew heavily upon newly converted Persians and other non-Arabs for support.[35] Once in power, the Abbasids continued the Umayyad practice of dynastic succession. In recognition of demographic realities, they embraced Sunni Islam at the

[32] C.W. Previté-Orton, *The Shorter Cambridge Medieval History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) 236.
[33] Lapidus, 58-67.
[34] Previté-Orton, 239.
[35] Hourani, 31-33.

expense of the Shi'a, and shifted the capital from Damascus to the new city of Baghdad, geographically closer to their non-Arab support base, in 762 CE.[36]

In the long run, the Abbasids were unable to maintain direct control over such a vast and diverse empire. Islam became and remains firmly rooted in almost all of the territories conquered during the initial wave of expansion under Arab leadership, but political unity was ephemeral. The Abbasid decision to make a political break from a traditionally ethnic Arab power base within Islam led to a contraction of the empire, and central authority slowly fractured over the next five centuries into autonomous provinces headed by hereditary rulers under nominal caliphal suzerainty. While this sustained the spread of Islam, it served to reinforce ethnic identity over religious affiliation in political matters.[37]



Map 2: The Ottoman and Safavid Empires

[36] Vartan Gregorian, *Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith*, (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003) 26-38.
[37] Hourani, 38-43.

The Abbasid Caliphate ended with the sacking of Baghdad in 1258.[38] Subsequently, numerous ethnically based dynasties vied for control of the region.[39] After two and a half centuries, two empires, the Ottoman and Safavid, succeeded in restoring long-term stability to Persian Iran and Arab Iraq. The Safavids, for their part, defined modern Iran's geography, culture, and religion.[40] Under their leadership, Iran enjoyed a cultural renaissance that saw Persian art, architecture, literature, and poetry blossom with impressive results. Most importantly, the Safavids established Twelver Shi'a Islam as their official religion and compelled their subjects to convert. Certainly, this was to some extent a reflection of piety and faith. It was also a well-planned political move. The Twelver sect was and remains the largest segment of Shi'a Islam. This decision broadened Safavid appeal and cemented stable sources of traditional political and military power to the dynasty. Simultaneously, it established a clear distinction between the Safavids and their rival, the Ottomans, who were ethnically Turkish and embraced Sunni Islam.[41] Conflict between the two was inevitable.

In 1502, the Safavid Empire, expanding westward from Persia, united the majority of the territory of modern Iraq (with the exception of the western desert) under one ruler.[42] Ten years later, having long focused their attention on Europe, the Ottoman Empire began expanding into the Levant and Mesopotamia. In 1517, Cairo fell to the Sunni Ottomans and the title of Caliph passed to the Ottoman Sultan, creating a theological juxtaposition between the two Empires. Subsequently, the Ottomans seized Tabriz and Baghdad from the Safavids in 1534. What followed was a century of intermittent hostilities that saw the Ottomans predominately in control

[38] Spuler, 99-100.
[39] Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2002): 209.
[40] Lapidus, 287.
[41] Eaton L. Daniel, *The History of Iran*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 86-89.
[42] Lapidus, 287.

of Arab lands to include what is today Iraq, and the Safavids predominantly in control of Persian lands in what is today Iran. [43]

This situation acknowledged the swath of territory between the two where Imperial control culminated. The frontier was formalized in the 1639 Treaty of Zuhab. This demarcation became the basis for all subsequent negotiations and treaties, which further transitioned the rather vague notion of a frontier into the current concept of a boundary line. In 1869, an international commission established the frontier down to a strip that was, on average, twenty-five miles wide.[44] There have been and continue to be numerous specific points of contention along the border, particularly with regard to possession of the Shat al-Arab waterway.[45] The point, however, is that large, semi-permanent shifts that have a significant demographic impact have not occurred for almost five centuries along the current border between Iran and Iraq.[46]

During that period, theological developments within the broader Shi'a community have reduced further the probability of Iran successfully exercising long-term influence and control in southern Iraq. As with many faiths, there are various interpretations and schools of thought that denominate the believers. Such is the case with Shi'a Islam. Even within the Twelver sect, the group which comprises the vast majority of all Shi'a to include those in Iraq and Iran, there are three dominate interpretations. They are associated geographically with the main centers of Shi'a study at Karbala and Najaf in Iraq and at Qom in Iran. Of the three, Najaf is by far the most influential. The leading scholar in Najaf is Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. Almost all Iraqi

[43] Hans J. Kissling, et al., *The Last Great Muslim Empires*, (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996), 27-37.
[44] Reeva Spector Simon and Elenor H. Tejirian, eds., *The Creation of Iraq, 1914-1922*, (Columbia International Affairs 2004), http://www.ciaonet.org/book/sir01/index.html (accessed May 2, 2008), 66.
[45] Keith McLachlan, ed., *The Boundaries of Modern Iran*, (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 74-82.
[46] Ibid., 57-61.

Shi'a and approximately 75% of all Shi'a in the World follow the interpretations of the Najaf leadership. By contrast, Qom has attracted few followers outside of Iran.[47]

The key distinction between these interpretations, which hinders long-term collaboration between, much less subordination of, southern Iraq, is the interpretation of the role of religious leaders in politics. The oldest and most respected interpretation comes from Najaf and has been embodied in the teaching and actions of al-Sistani. He advises that religious leaders should avoid politics and advocates a strong separation between religion and government.[48] The break came when Ayatollah Khomeini, the future leader of the Iranian Revolution, began refining and preaching the concept of *Wilayat al-Faqih* in the madrasa in Qom. Wilayat al-Faqih, or rule by religious expert, is the central justification for Iran's theocracy.[49]

The final and most compelling evidence to assuage fears that southern Iraq will willingly subordinate itself to the political control of Iran is the eight-year war fought between the two countries in the 1980s and its subsequent impact on the people who live in Iraq. It is true that in 1982, certain Shi'a factions fled Iraq and formed the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, or SCIRI. Mainly through their military arm, the Badr Corps, the SCIRI has been actively involved in undermining Iraqi stability since.[50] Nevertheless, the Arab Shi'a who remained in Iraq generally remained loyal to the State and to Saddam Hussein, contributing significant manpower to Iraq's military. Of course, one could counter that this was only due to State-imposed coercion, but that does not paint the entire picture. What is compelling is the fact that there is no evidence suggesting that significant numbers of the Arabs of Southern Iraq

[47] "The Creation of an Arab Shia Democratic Alternative to Iran – Part 1," The Henry Jackson Society. 21 March 2007, http://www.henryjacksonsociety.org//stories. asp?id=74&p=1, accessed on 23 May 2008.
[48] Sharon Otterman, "Iraq: Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani," 1 September 2004. *Council on Foreign Relations*, http://www.cfr.org/publication/7636/, accessed on 23 May 2008.
[49] Faleh A. Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, (London: Saqi, 2003), 158.
[50] Ibid., 235.

collaborated with the Iranians at any time during the eight year war. Even during the 1988 battle on the al-Faw Peninsula, when there was the greatest incentive and opportunity, they remained loyal even though Iraq sustained 50,000 casualties.[51] This indicates the strong predisposition of the people of southern Iraq to self-identify along ethnic rather than religious lines. The Iraqi Shi'a are concerned about the influence Iran is having in Iraq. In March of 2007, 67 percent of Iraqis felt that Iran was a negative force in the country and 71 percent believed Iran was encouraging sectarian violence.[52]

It is not in the interest of the people who live in southern Iraq, who happen to be predominately Shi'a, to seek a long-term political alliance with Iran. Rather, the evidence suggests that it is in the interest of the southern Iraqis and also their predisposition to prefer integration into the larger Arab portion of the Gulf region. In fact, with the exception of Arab Shi'a groups based in Iran and the Iranians themselves, there does not appear to be any significant group either within southern Iraq or the region who would prefer an Iranian alliance.

Similarly, it is not in the interest of the people of northern Iraq, who happen to be predominately Kurdish, to seek broad ethnic union across the region. History does not support such a concern and there are few indicators that the northern Iraqis are seeking to foster such an outcome. Likewise, there is little evidence to suggest that Kurdish populations in neighboring countries are seeking integration with northern Iraq.

It is important to have as complete an understanding of that history as possible, identifying "truth" and, within human limitations, separating truth adequation from truth disclosure. Only then can one begin to address, and if necessary redress, preconceived notions and understand the relevant groups and dynamics at play. There are many within Iraq, the region,

[51] Amatzia Baram and Barry M. Rubin, *Iraq's Road to War*, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillian, 1993), 29.
[52] Pat Proctor, "The Mythical Shia Crescent," *Parameters* 38. 1 (Spring 2008): 34.

and internationally that are deeply concerned about Kurdish irredentism and Shi'a hegemony. Of course such a thing could happen; however, the evidence does not lead one to the conclusion that such an outcome is probable. This broadens US policy options to include allowing the consideration of the possible disintegration of Iraq.

CHAPTER 3: UNSTABLE BY DESIGN

> The good intentions of the statesmen of Iraq, whose political experience is necessarily small, it is to be feared that serious difficulties may arise out of the differences which in some cases exist in regard to political ideas between the Shiites of the South and the Sunnites of the North, the racial differences between Arabs and Kurds, and the necessity of keeping the turbulent tribes under control….These difficulties might be fatal to the very existence of the State if it were left without support and guidance.
>
> -Report to the League of Nations, 16 July, 1925[53]

Iraq has a long history of continuous population, extending back millennium. It can be a confusing ebb and flow of conflicting and complementary events and movements. Under such circumstances, one is prone to fall prey to three fallacies common in discussions of such complex regional ethnic and religious issues. They cloud discussion of viable ways to achieve national interests in the region.

The first fallacy is of complexity. This is the idea that events are so confusing and obscure that it is impossible to clearly identify the issues, much less work through them toward a viable solution. The second fallacy is of denial. This is the idea that the situation is intractable, that nothing ever changes and even if it does, it cannot change for the better. The third fallacy is of primordialism. This is the idea that the groups involved are culturally or genetically predisposed to conflict and therefore, resolution is impossible.[54]

In the case of Iraq, these fallacies are simply not true. There is a long history of warfare in the region. However, the various groups living within the current geography of Iraq have historically enjoyed significant periods of peace and prosperity. Conflict, when it occurs, has invariably been over land, resources, and power.

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[53] As reported by Roger Cohen, "The Ottoman Swede," *The New York Times*, 13 September 2007.

[54] This concept was articulated by Julie A Mertus in *Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1999), 5. Mertus discussion focused on the regional conflict in the Balkans and the Serbia v. Kosovo conflict specifically. However, her analysis is applicable for many regional conflicts, to include Iraq.

More to the point, the current conditions for instability are not rooted in antiquity. The ancient history and perceptions of the region are important, but it is even more important to remember that the countries of the region are not at all old. The seeds that have grown into the patchwork of unstable and authoritarian states that populate large portions of the Middle East were planted during and immediately following the First World War. It is this construct, more than ancient and often misperceived notions, that limits the possible and defines the probable in Iraq.

The ground in which those seeds were planted was prepared during the long twilight of Ottoman decline that began at the gates of Vienna in 1683. During that period, a series of mutually beneficial bilateral treaties designed by Muslim Ottoman and Christian European rulers began to shift and became increasingly one-sided, favoring the Europeans. These agreements are known as the capitulations.

It is little remembered that the first capitulations date from the Byzantine Empire. Byzantium first entered into preferential trade and tariff treaties with the Venetians in 1082 CE.[55] The Byzantines made similar arrangements with the other trading states, expanding their role in Byzantine commerce.[56]

The capitulations are an interesting example of truth adaquation and how truth disclosure can shape self-identification. While certainly not accurate at the time they were developed, today, any reference to the capitulations connotes surrender and subjugation. Today, the people of the region carry this baggage and view the capitulations with shame. Populist politicians can and frequently do invoke the imagery of the capitulations to counter their opposition, particularly if the issue appears to involve cooperation with a western nation. Understanding such self-

[55] Donald M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 59-64, 248-49.
[56] Cyril A. Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome*, (New York, NY: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980), 83-87.

perceptions is relevant when dealing with the region. Of more concrete impact is how the specific nature of the capitulations shaped the interest and geographic focus of France and England, the two powers most directly responsible for the modern map of the Middle East.

The Ottoman capitulations initially developed from contact with France as an unintended consequence of European Balance-of-Power politics. In 1521, King Francis I reached an agreement with Suleiman the Magnificent. The French strategy was to weaken their chief rival in Western Europe, the Habsburgs, by forcing them to focus against the Ottomans in the east. For their part, the Ottomans saw benefit in preventing an Austrian hegemony that might focus its attention eastward. This was an arguably successful strategy that benefited both the France and the Ottoman Empire through the Sixteenth Century.[57]

The Ottomans, initially dealing from a position of strength, saw economic advantage in reciprocal commercial and confessional capitulations with France, and eventually with other European powers. They interpreted these bilateral agreements to be revocable by the Sultan. In application, they were consistently renewed and expanded. By the early 1800s, the balance of power had shifted. The Sultan had divested himself of significant elements of sovereignty in regard to non-Muslims within the Empire and found it politically impossible to unilaterally end the capitulations.[58]

The economic design and confessional nature of the capitulations established the geographic pattern of European national influence within the Ottoman Empire, beginning generally in a port area and emanating inland to include the strategic and economically significant territory associated with the port. Early on, the French became established in the Levant, particularly

[57] Erica Fraser, et al., *The Islamic World to 1600*, The Applied History Research Group, The University of Calgary, http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/islam/empires/ottoman/suleyman.html, accessed on 24 May 2008.
[58] Hourani, 258-259.

through the ports of Alexandretta and Beirut.[59] Significant British interest emerged over time as a function of their maritime empire, focused on the Suez, Bab el Mandeb, and the Shat al-Arab. Eventually, Britain established a colony in Aden,[60] occupied Egypt,[61] and developed significant economic and political interests in the Ottoman Caza of Kuwait, the Province of Basra, and eventually the Province of Baghdad.[62]

In an attempt to address this shift in relative power, the Ottomans attempted a long series of reforms during the 19th century. The intent was to catch up structurally and developmentally with the other European states by strengthening the Sultan's authority while simultaneously limiting Europe's ability to intervene in domestic affairs. Ultimately, the effort was unsuccessful. The lower tariffs required to stimulate economic development deepened European control of the Ottoman economy while the substance of the reforms penetrated only the top layers of Ottoman society. In the end, the long-standing system was weakened without the development of a viable alternative.[63]

This set the stage for the rise of nationalism among some of the empire's varied subjects. The strongest and most successful nationalist movements were in the Balkans.[64] As a result, the Ottomans, already contracting from outside attacks, slowly lost possessions in Europe due to internal revolt during the final decades of the 19th century.[65] Map 3a depicts the extent of direct Ottoman control prior to World War I. Decline fostered Turkish nationalism, manifest in the imperialist Young Turks, who gained control of the Ottoman Empire and lead it into the First

[59] Lapidus, 335.
[60] Hourani, 269.
[61] Karsh, 62-68.
[62] William R. Polk, *Understanding Iraq*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), 61-65.
[63] Lapidus, 598-600.
[64] Efram Karsh and Inari Karsh, *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East 1789-1923*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 69.
[65] Lapidus, 595.

World War.[66] Arab interests remained local and tribal. Nationalism, though certainly present, was not a major factor of the fighting in the Middle East.[67]

The weaknesses of the Ottoman system, the impact of the capitulations, and, to a lesser extent, nascent nationalism all came together in the crucible of the First World War to shape the territory of Iraq. France, fighting the Germans from her own soil, spent minimal direct effort against the Ottomans. Czarist Russia seized Ottoman territory around the Black Sea and continued to press forward until the Russian Revolution. The new communist government made a separate peace with the Ottoman government.

Britain, with the greatest economic interests in the region, pursued a shrewd strategy that anticipated a successful conclusion to the war and, early on, set conditions that would protect British interests long after hostilities ceased. Those interests included direct economic activity and resources in the region, as well as the vital transport and communications link the Middle East provided between England the far-flung colonial empire.

In addition, petroleum became a strategic factor following the decision in 1912 to convert the British fleet from coal to oil. Britain had to maintain access to secure petroleum sources or risk strangulation by her enemies. First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill declared, "We must become the owners or at any rate the controllers at the source of at least a proportion of the oil which we require."[68] Two years later, in 1914, the British bought controlling interest in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which controlled the fields in Iran. The same transaction gained control of Anglo-Persian's majority share in Deutsche Bank's Turkish Petroleum Company,

[66] Byron Dexter, *The Years of Opportunity: the League of Nations, 1920-1926*, (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1967), 126.
[67] Karsh, 171-172.
[68] Winston Churchill, quoted in Peter Slulgett, *Britain in Iraq: 1914-1932*, (London, UK: Ithaca Press, 1976), 103-4.

which controlled the fields in Mosul Province.[69] By the end of the war, Mosul was added to the expanding area of Ottoman territory considered of vital interest to the British Empire.

Thus British strategy had four objectives: force the Ottoman government out of the war; secure British interests in the Provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul; maintain the Suez; and weaken Ottoman control of the Middle East following hostilities. To that end, in November 1914 Britain secured the port of Basra, which they held for the remainder of the war, yet they were unable to exploit that success.[70] Pressing up the Tigris toward Baghdad, Britain surrendered over thirteen thousand troops to the Ottomans at the siege of Kut.[71] They did not manage to occupy Mosul during the war. Likewise, the direct approached against the center of Ottoman power in Istanbul failed. The Ottomans repulsed first a naval attempt to penetrate the Dardanelles in March of 1915 and then an overland drive from Gallipoli in January 1916.[72] The Suez remained in British hands throughout the war. Egypt served as a staging base for the Gallipoli campaign[73] and later for campaigns into the Levant that weakened Ottoman control and ultimately succeeded in capturing Damascus on 1 October 1918.[74]

The efforts to foster Arab rebellion were fractious, but have played an important role in modern regional perceptions.[75] There were several Arab candidates vying for British support. Hussain, the Sharif of Mecca, was perceived to have the best chance of success and received the bulk of British funding and support.[76] Negotiations with the Sharif were conducted through the British High Commissioner in Egypt, Sir Henry McMahon, in a series of letters between July

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[69] Slulgett, 105.
[70] Martin Marix Evans, *Battles of World War I*, (Marlborough, UK: Airlife Publishing Ltd., 2004), 86.
[71] Karsh, 145-147.
[72] Evans, 86-88, 91-92.
[73] David R. Woodward, *Hell in the Holy Land: World War I in the Middle East*, (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 15-16.
[74] Matthew Hughes, *Allenby and British Strategy in the Middle East 1917-1919*, (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1999), 30.
[75] Karsh, 185.
[76] Karsh, 179.

1915 and January 1916. Hussain, with substantial religious authority as well as significant latent military capability, wanted assurances of British support for an Arab Kingdom, under his rule, extending over the entire Arabian Peninsula (excluding Aden), the Levant, and Mesopotamia. The British insisted upon recognition of their interests in Kuwait, Basra, and Baghdad, and refused to bargain away French interests in the Levant.[77] Map 3b illustrates the final arrangement.

A small cadre of British officers, of which T. E. Lawrence is the best remembered, advised, organized, supplied, and coordinated Arab forces. Those forces were led by Hussein's son Faisal, thus giving him a stake in the post war power structure. In cooperation with General Allenby's campaigns from Egypt, they succeeded in driving the Ottomans off the Arabian Peninsula northward to a line just south of the current Turkish border by the end of the war.[78]

In the end, Hussein became King of the Hejaz and his sons ruled in Iraq and Transjordan. This was dramatically different from the vision described in his correspondence with McMahon. This is due to two separate circumstances that made the provisions for a pan-Arab Kingdom politically undesirable and arguably impossible. The first is a 1916 secret agreement, concluded between England, France, and Czarist Russia, known as the Sikes-Picot Agreement. This Agreement established primary zones of control and influence for the signatory powers that protected their historic interests on Ottoman territory and ensured their ability to exert control over the region for the indefinite future Map3C depicts the agreed allocation of territory to Britain and France. It mirrors the pattern of interest and influence developed over time through the capitulations.

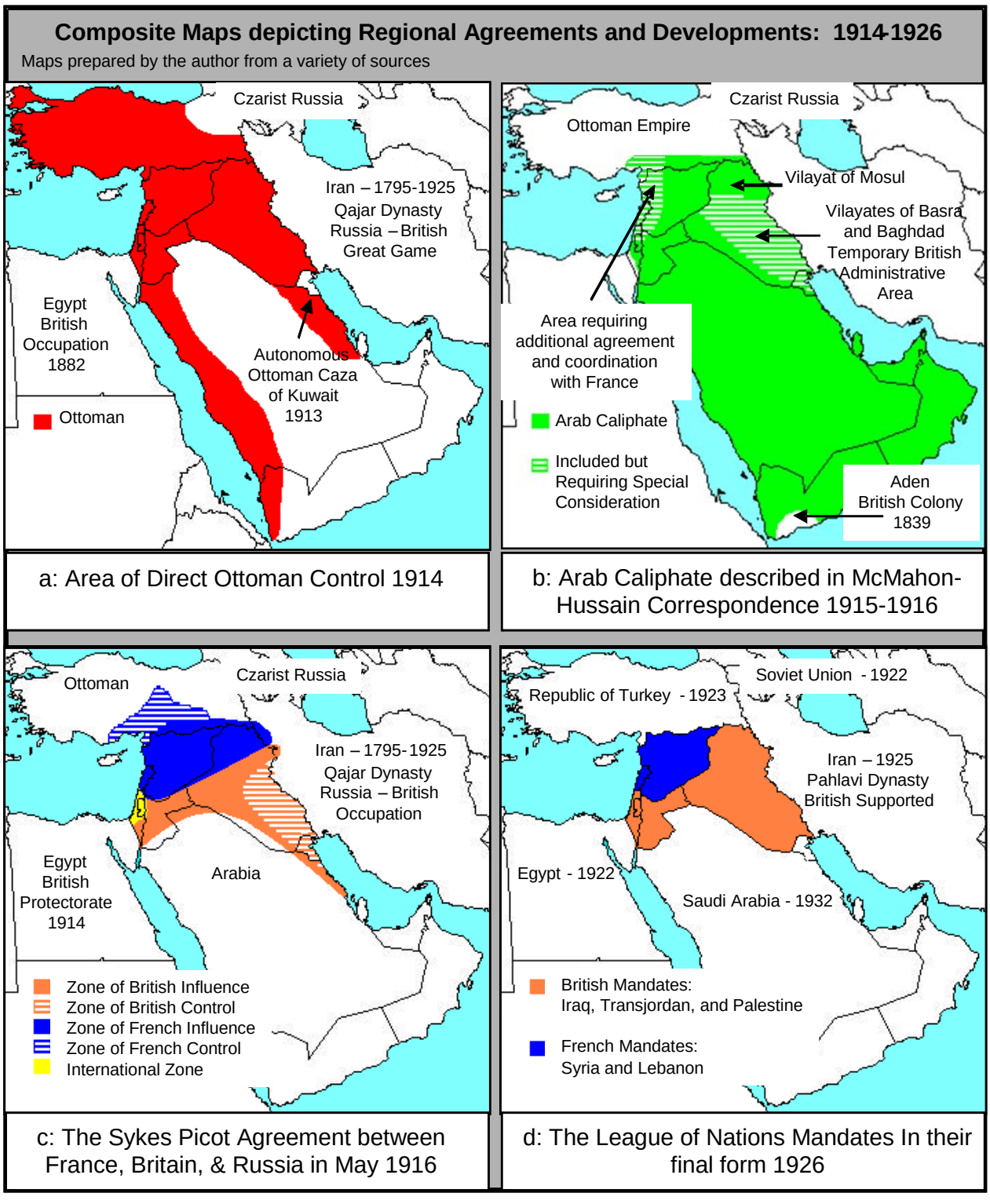
[77] McMahon, Henry and Hussein bin Ali, "McMahon Hussein Correspondence, 1915-1916," *Council on Foreign Relations,* http://www.cfr.org/publication/13762/mcmahon_hussein_correspondence_ 19151916.html, accessed on 19 April 2008.
[78] Hughes, 30.

The second circumstance was produced by two wildcards that dramatically altered the map and unhinged wartime planning for the postwar Middle East. The Turks, lead by Mustafa Kemal, ejected the occupying powers and established the Republic of Turkey in 1923. With one stroke, Turkey ejected the victors of the war from Anatolia; ended the vestigial Ottoman Empire; obliterated the provisions of the Treaty of Sevres; curtailed French influence to the territories of Syria and Lebanon; and threatened British interests in the Iraq Mandate.

Likewise, Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud exceeded British wartime expectations. Twice previously, the House of Saud had controlled a large portion of the Arabian Peninsula, from 1744 to 1818 and again from 1824 to 1891. Beginning in 1902, Abul Aziz began campaigning to recapture that position.[79] The British, hedging their bet on Hussain, recognized Ibn Saud as the hereditary ruler of Najd, Hasa, Qatif, and Jabail in 1915, and provided him a small annual remittance in return for his neutrality regarding the Ottomans. He did not support the Ottomans, but he did use the ensuing instability to consolidate his position. He ousted Hussain, the King of the Hejaz, in 1924 and established the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by 1932.[80]

Into this turbulent environment the modern state of Iraq was created. The victors quickly occupied Ottoman territory and established large protectorates in Anatolia. The Ottoman Empire survived on life support through the Treaty of Sevres.[81] In order to maintain their positions of advantage and influence in the region, France accepted Mandates in Syria and Lebanon while British Mandates were in Iraq, Transjordan, and Palestine.

[79] Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington DC, "The History of Saudi Arabia," Embassy website, http://www.saudiembassy.net/country/history.asp, accessed on 5 July 2008.
[80] Karsh, 178.
[81] League of Nations Treaty Series. Vol XXVIII, No 1, 2, 3, 4, (1924).



Map 3: Disposition of Ottoman Territory

The Turkish War of Independence prevented the consolidation of the protectorates in Anatolia but did not impede the creation of the Mandates, which are shown in Map 3d. It should be noted how closely the assignment of mandates reflects the interests of the British and French as articulated in both the McMahon Hussain Correspondence and the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

Following the war, Britain had to strike a regional balance between competing interests and commitments. Obligated to support Arab rule, Britain sought to protect her regional position by replacing Ottoman hegemony with multiple Arab states. Hussein, the Sharif of Mecca, did not step into a pan-Arab Kingdom but became the ruler of the Kingdom of the Hejaz. His eldest son, Ali, was designated the heir apparent. His two other sons, Abdullah and Faisal, were also promised kingdoms.

Faisal, who commanded Hussain's Arab forces and entered Damascus with General Allenby, was initially installed as the King of Syria. As it became clear that the French would lose their position in Anatolia to the Turks, they looked to strengthen their hold on the Levant. When the French assumed the Syria Mandate, they replaced Faisal, who was too closely associated with the British.

This left Britain with responsibility for both of Hussain's sons. In a very Solomon-like decision, Britain split the baby and installed Abdullah in the Transjordan Mandate and Faisal in the Iraq Mandate. By selecting Faisal, a Hashemite and a Sunni, Britain established a pattern in Iraq of a Sunni government for the predominately Shi'a population that continues to the present time.

The initial Iraq Mandate, first created in August 1921, consisted of the Ottoman Provinces of Basra and Baghdad. Britain retained influence in the Mosul Province through the Treaty of Sevres with the Ottomans and control of the oil through its holding in the Turkish

Petroleum Company. The Republic of Turkey, recognized in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, superseded the Treaty of Sevres and threatened the British position.[82] Turkey maintained that the Mosul Province was an integral part of Turkey. The British argued that Iraq needed the Mosul Province for economic and strategic viability. The Mosul question was deferred to arbitration.[83]

The League sent a commission to the region that struggled to balance the concerns of all parties with the principle of self-determination. In the end, the commission determining that the interests and desires of the people of Mosul Province were best served by attaching Mosul to a British controlled Iraq. Absent a strong British presence, the commission recommended attaching Mosul to Turkey.[84] Since the Mandate directed Britain to remain in Iraq until such time as the new nation could stand on its own, the League of Nations included Mosul within the mandate in 1926 and established the current geographic boundaries of today's Iraq.[85]

Britain considered the security of its economic interests and imperial communications lines as vital. Britain established British administration and imposed stability, frequently through military force. Iraqi government and political institutions were developed to protect British interests in the long term and to generate a perpetual reliance on British guidance and leadership. This was the situation on 23 August 1921, when Faisal assumed the throne of Iraq. He was the son of the Sharif of Mecca, Commander of the Arab forces, deposed King of Syria, and totally dependant upon Britain for his position.[86]

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[82] League of Nations Treaty Series. Vol XXXV, no 1, 2, 3, (1925).
[83] Reeva Spector Simon and Elenor H. Tejirian, eds., *The Creation of Iraq, 1914-1922,* Columbia International Affairs 2004, http://www.ciaonet.org/book/sir01/index.html, accessed May 2, 2008, 53.
[84] Simon, 57.
[85] Gerald Chaliand, ed., *People without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, Translated by Michael Pallis, (London, UK: Zed Press, 1980), 38-44. Gerald provides the most detailed account of British post-war actions, the Treaty of Serves, and the Mosul Vilayat.
[86] Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Iraq, 1900 to 1950: A Political, Social, and Economic History*, (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1956), 99-134.

Iraq, and its dependent authoritarian model, has remained intact, though violent and turbulent. It has not enjoyed a single decade that was not marred by revolt, coup, or open warfare – either internal or external. For all of its trappings as a viable state, institutional development remains shallow. Real power has always been confined to a small band of political elite who shared power and shuffle frequently through the ministerial positions. They maintain their status through patronage and support from a particular faction to whom they hold personal allegiance.[87]

This is because the victors of the First World War reasonably prioritized protection of their interests ahead of constructing a region composed of stable, strong, and viable nations. They envisioned a model where a strong ruler could maintain stability and protect those interests while remaining dependent on a greater power for patronage. To a degree, this model worked for almost sixty years of turbulent regional developments and the Cold War. Iraq survived intact through rebellions, coups, an eight-year war with Iran, a disastrous invasion of Kuwait, and twelve years of international sanctions and sovereignty restrictions. What Iraq appears unable to survive is the absence of an authoritarian leader. It is inherently weak and structurally unstable. Its natural tendency is to disintegrate into its constituent elements of greater political cohesion and stability.

The British certainly found this patronage model to be in their best interest in the twenties and thirties. Arguably, this was an effective, if brutal construct through the bipolar era of the Cold War. Since then, however, the model has lost its utility. The re-emergence of another authoritarian leader, a Saddam II, will not produce an acceptable outcome. Such states are no longer in anyone's interest. The world has changed. The growth and spread of globalization;

[87] Longrigg, 224-225, was speaking in the past tense and referring to the situation in the 1930s and 1940s, but the assessment remains true through the present.

economic integration; information transfer; and the proliferation and synergy of organized crime and terrorism have exposed the structural weaknesses of authoritarian regimes, weak and failed states, and ungoverned territories.

Unfortunately, there remains an underlying perception that somehow the current state system is fixed. It is a legacy of the Cold War, which provided a harsh stability for a nation-state system that no longer exists. It is not true. Neither is the slippery slope argument true. Independence movements will ebb and flow of their own volition, and will not result in an unmanageable proliferation of states leading to the collapse of the entire system under its own weight.

It is true that the short-term trend has been toward creating additional states, but it is not difficult to imagine scenarios in the future that will trend toward consolidation. It is also difficult to argue that the states of Africa will not need dramatic alterations before achieving effective cooperation, stability, and prosperity. The state system is and will remain in a constant state of slow flux for the foreseeable future. This is a healthy condition that allows for needed adjustments as situations change.

The states which emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union as well as the disintegration of Yugoslavia into its composite republics illustrate this point well. The further reduction of the Republic of Serbia by the more recent independence of Kosovo is an even better example. It also demonstrates the weakness of the irredentist argument. Since the 1960s, Serbia has used the fear of a Greater Albania to keep control of Kosovo, yet since independence, there has been no discernable movement in that direction from the Albanians in Kosovo or Albania.

Like the States of the Balkans, the Iraq is a product of World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Iraq has never had an extended period of peace throughout the eighty-

seven years of its existence. Absent an authoritarian ruler, instability has dominated. Therefore, it is incumbent upon and in the best interest of the United States, the region, and the people living in Iraq to seek solutions that will produce a more stable, integrated, and secure territory.

CHAPTER 4: US STRATEGY AND THE REALM OF THE PROBABLE

According to the *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* published in November 2005, the long-term objective of the United States for Iraq is a nation that is "peaceful, united, stable and secure, well integrated into the international community, and a full partner in the global war on terrorism (GWOT)."[88] In support of that objective, in 2007, the President announced a surge in US military, diplomatic, and economic effort.[89]

By every measure, and even considering recent upticks in violence, the surge has produced dramatically increased security within the geography of Iraq.[90] The recent testimony of Ambassador Crocker[91] and General Petraeus[92] painted a generally optimistic picture but acknowledged that sustained and significant US effort was still required and that the progress made was fragile and reversible. In spite of all the effort and progress toward security, the US appears no closer to achieving its long-term objectives for Iraq.

That end remains elusive, in part because the United States has not fully met its own obligations. The military element, for the most part has been successful. However, the application of the economic instrument has been plagued by delays, scandals, inefficiency, and corruption. The diplomatic element has suffered from a lack of willing, available experts from

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[88] National Security Council, *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, (Washington, D.C.: The White House, November 2005), 1.
[89] George W. Bush, "President's Address to the Nation," 10 January 2007, linked from The White House Home Page at "News Releases http://www/whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/ 01/print/20070110-7.html: Internet; accessed 12 November 2007.
[90] There are many sources tracking various indicators of success in Iraq. All of the security related indicators show a dramatic decrease in violence. The most comprehensive single source for data is compiled by Michael E. O'Hanlon and Jason H. Campbell, "Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq," The Brookings Institute, updated monthly (this assessment comes from data in the April 14, 2008 edition), http://www/brookings.edu/saban/iraq-index.aspx.
[91] Ryan C. Crocker, "Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the Situation and Progress in Iraq," The Stars and Stripes Newspaper, April 10, 2008, http://www.stripes.com/articleprint.asp?section=104&article=53933, accessed on 10 April 2008.
[92] David H. Petraeus, "Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the Situation and Progress in Iraq," The Stars and Stripes Newspaper, April 10, 2008, http://www.stripes.com/articleprint.asp?section=104&article=53933, accessed on 10 April 2008.

the various civilian disciplines. Arguably, this shortage of US commitment has created sufficient risk to undermine the strategy. But that does not get at the root of the issue, which is the poor showing of the Government of Iraq (GOI).

In application, the GOI has been unable to meet its obligations. While making contributions to increased security in Baghdad, it has made little progress on reconciliation, which is critical to the strategy. Lack of will, corruption, and sectarian interests have undermined the Iraqi effort.[93] If the GOI cannot be successful, then the US strategy must eventually fail.

This is because the US strategy is based on two questionable assumptions. The first questionable assumption is that a majority of Iraqis shared a commonality of objective with the United States. This includes the notion the President put forward that most Sunni and Shi'a want to live together in peace.[94] It is intuitive that the majority of humans, regardless of their self-identification, wish to live in peace. However, the leaders of the various groups in Iraq appear to want peace on their terms, and are willing to fight to achieve it. There are few indications that a significant enough number of Iraqi leaders are willing to make the substantive compromises necessary to achieve sustainable peace. In fact, to date, no significant political compromise has been effectively implemented by the Iraqi government.[95] Yet the requirement for such compromises underpins the entire strategy.

The second questionable assumption is based on the Iraqi Prime Minister's statements to the effect that operations in Iraq, and by extension the behavior of the leaders in the Iraqi

[93] Jessica T. Mathews, "The Surge has Failed in Its Objectives," The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Policy Outlook*, (September 2007), 2-3.
[94] Bush.
[95] Daniel Serwer and Sam Parker, "Iraq After the Surge: Options and Questions," *USIPeace Briefing*, Washington DC: United States Institute for Peace (April 2008), 3.

government, would no longer be influenced by negative sectarian and political interference.[96] From the standpoint of security, this assumption appears to be valid; as coalition operations are effective, violence decreases, and stability emerges. But reporting indicates that sectarian elements may be using the surge as an opportunity to re-arm and refit, knowing that the United States probably lacks the will to sustain elevated force levels indefinitely.[97] Therefore, politically, this assumption has little basis in fact. Not only has the Iraqi government failed to make major progress toward reconciliation, but some elements have made great strides in the opposite direction. For example, the Kurdish Regional Government has pushed ahead with international oil deals, disregarding the directives of the central government.[98] Additionally, deliberate demographic shifts of Arabs and Kurds continue as the government vacillates on a constitutionally mandated referendum for the control of Kirkuk, a historically Kurdish city.[99]

Thus far, US strategy, which is underpinned by assumptions that are proving to be invalid, has failed to move Iraq closer to the stated and unchanged US objective. The chances of successfully converting the state of Iraq from an oppressive, authoritarian, and brutal dictatorship into a peaceful, united, stable, and secure state were, from the outset, extremely low, but it was possible. As time passes without fruitful result, the odds continue to decline, but the possibility remains. This has led to a binary strategic discussion of the possible, centering on the two options of remaining or departing. At this point, it might be wise to adjust the paradigm and consider what is probable.

Though it is impossible to prove a negative, we can explore the counterfactual and assess probability. Consider that there is not one single Iraqi politician that has been elected on a

[96] Bush.
[97] Sam Dagher, "Iraq's Sadr Uses Lull to Rebuild Army," *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 December 2007, 1.
[98] Sameer N. Yacoub, "Iraqi Lawmakers Mount Attack on Kurdish Oil Deals," *Seattle Times*, 30 November 2007.
[99] Lauren Frayer, "Arabs and Kurds Migrate, Change Kirkuk," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 9 December 2007.

platform of or expounding the cause of Iraqi nationhood. There is no militia fighting for the best interest of the nation of Iraq nor has there been a popular uprising supporting such a movement. This sounds flippant, but it is significant: there is no constituency for the nation state of Iraq. Without any internal constituency, it is virtually impossible to envision a scenario in which there will ever be sufficient critical mass to form a strong, stable, and durable Iraq. Therefore, the geography of Iraq is probably not going to transform into anything close to what was originally envisioned.

By remaining on the current course, there are two probable scenarios. The first and most probable scenario is that Iraq will continue to exist in its current twilight of semi-viability. Over time, the U.S. military commitment will certainly decrease. It may be supplemented by the international community, and there will be just enough diplomatic and economic pressure and incentives to hold the place together. Focus will be lost in the ambient noise of regional and international politics. It will become yet another frozen portion of the globe, lost to significant, meaningful development and integration into the larger world community. In short, just the sort of breeding ground for international crime and terrorism that is counter to US interest.

The second most likely scenario has Iraq following the natural course envisioned by its creators. A strongman will emerge as a result of or as an enabler of US disengagement. This philosophical descendant of King Faisal I will stabilize the geography of Iraq through repressive, authoritarian means and remain in power through control of oil revenues. There will be, more or less, a return to the status quo ante.

Neither of these most probable scenarios is satisfactory. Neither will protect or advance US interests; neither will satisfy the US war obligation to create improved conditions; neither will meet the desires and interests of the people living in the territory of Iraq; neither will

produce a more stable, secure region. In either case, the antagonists in the region, Syria and Iran, will continue comfortably to follow the familiar path of regional foils.

All of the mechanisms currently under discussion increase the likelihood of one of the two most probable scenarios being realized. Strong central control, proportional representation, or any form of partition involving a federal or confederal system leave the territory of Iraq open to the same twin forces that have plagued it since its creation.

The first force is internal. While the overwhelming majority of the humans that live in the territory of Iraq can be called "Iraqi" and they would all certainly hold Iraqi passports if they traveled abroad, they do not see this as their primary identification. Almost all "Iraqis" self-identify along ethnic or confessional lines. A state draws its legitimacy from its population. It cannot function effectively, or in this case adequately, to satisfy US interests, if a majority of its citizens attach primary loyalty to a group other than the state. It will be a state that is constantly undermined from within by endemic corruption and special interests. More importantly, from the perspective of the United States and its regional partners, it is a state that is an easy target for the second force that plagues Iraq, external interference.

The Iraq that emerged from the League of Nations Mandate was created with an eye to facilitating outside influence – British – in Iraq. Over time, the nature of this external interference has changed, but the underlying architecture had remained. All of Iraq's neighbors have exploited this vulnerability to one degree or another since it was created. They continue to do so today, and there is every probability that they will continue to do so into the indefinite future.

Ultimately, both the internal and external forces that contribute to instability in Iraq cannot be adequately addressed in the context of the current strategic discussion. There is no

group or combination of groups with both the will and capability to achieve the critical mass necessary to simultaneously foster internal cohesion while preventing outside interference.

If the strategic discussion is broadened to include alternative objectives that still support national interests, then there is a third path, which is likely to occur anyway. It is also a path that has a high probability of achieving US interests and obligations while enhancing the long-term prospects of regional security and stability. It is a path that can turn the currently divisive sectarian interests to US advantage. It is based on the widely acknowledged reality that the Kurds in northern Iraq will almost certainly follow a path of independence just as soon as they perceive the likelihood of success from the international community.

Arguably, the Kurds of northern Iraq were set on a path that will ultimately lead to independence in 1991. The Northern No-Fly Zone and the Green Line restricted Iraqi military movement. The Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein was ejected from the region. Significant elements of Iraqi sovereignty were handed to a sub-national government lead by representatives of the two dominate Kurdish groups in the region. Over the ensuing years an effective government and security structure developed. Today, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) is independent in all but name. It taxes, collects customs, flies its own flag, and makes agreements with international businesses.

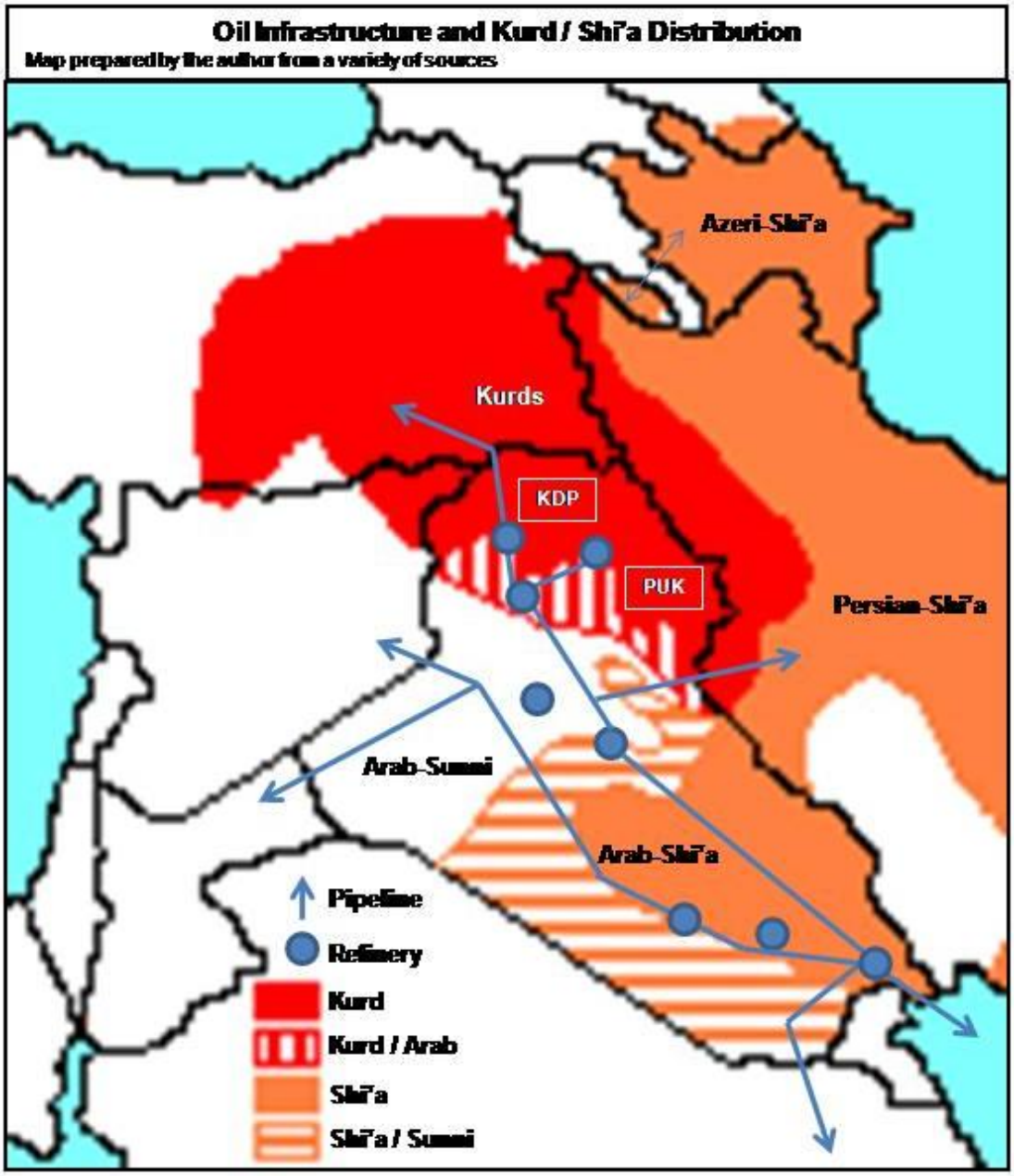
The region, once a separate Ottoman Province, is certainly capable of supporting economic development. The oil fields of northern Iraq are more than sufficient to build a robust export economy. In addition, northern Iraq has enough arable land and water to maintain an agricultural sector. Oil pipelines and road networks integrate the region into the broader economy primarily through Turkey and there are also links to southern Iraq and Jordan. More

importantly, the region has a long tradition of thriving trade and economic diversity. That tradition dramatically increases the likelihood of economic success and integration with the west.

Of course, history indicates that such a political construct in Northern Iraq may be just as in cohesive as the current state of Iraq. The two main Kurdish political parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), have certainly struggled with each other as much as with the central government. In fact, their lack of unity destroyed hopes of a Kurdish State in northern Iraq and led to the Kurdish Civil War of 1996. The region possesses in microcosm all of the divisive factors of religion, language, and tribal affiliation mentioned earlier.[100] Unlike the GOI, however, the KRG has made demonstrable moves toward viability, cooperation, and reconciliation. Most importantly, it would most likely continue to mature into a stable and western-oriented state.

Likewise, the resulting Arab State in Southern Iraq would better satisfy the interests of the inhabitants, the region, and the United States. With even greater oil resources and established processing and export routes, Southern Iraq would be economically viable. Like the north, much of Southern Iraq has possessed and is capable of sustaining a diverse, wealthy economy with a history of seeking integration into the broader, western-oriented system. By removing the Kurdish demographic, the Arab population that happens to be Shi'a would comprise an even larger segment of the residual population. This would create a more stable overall environment and over time will facilitate relations with the other Arab countries of the region as the myth of Shi'a hegemony fails to manifest itself.

[100] Yousif Hanna Freij, "Alliance Patterns of a Secessionist Movement: The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in Iraq," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 18 1 (April 1998): 19.



Map 4: Oil Infrastructure and Kurd / Shi'a Distribution

After all, Iraq is unstable by design. It is unlikely to mature into a coherent state that is internally stable and capable of preventing outside forces from misusing its territory and meddling in its domestic affairs. Is that going to produce an environment that is "good enough" to satisfy US interest? Arguably, no; it is not. However, the interests of the United States are

much broader than the geography confined by the boarders of Iraq. Additionally, the fate of the political entity known as Iraq is much less important than the fate of the human beings that live there. The United States should focus on a strategy that supports a more natural flow of events, one that in the short-term may produce a degree of instability, but eventually will allow for the development of a more stable, secure, and globally integrated region. Perhaps the strategic debate should be more vibrant than the current black and white rubric of stay-the-course or withdraw. A discussion of allowing the natural disintegration of Iraq into more stable elements provides the United States with more and arguably better strategic options.

CHAPTER 5: INTERESTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The single most important question a foreign policy advisor can pose is, "What is in the best interest of my country?" The answer to that question drives subsequent policy recommendations and defines the options available to national leaders. Ultimately, it is the answer to this question that drives the fate of nations. In the case of Iraq, US interests are regional, not national. It is in the interest of the United States, and ultimately of our regional partners, to see the region develop into a stable, prosperous, and secure group of states that are economically and politically oriented toward the west. Success depends on long-term political and economic stability and on transferring more power to the local leadership. In that context, it is not the US responsibility nor within its capacity to resolve all of the issues within the territory of Iraq.

There is a high degree of risk associated with the current path and with the strategic objective of maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq. The two probable outcomes, an authoritarian or a flaccid Iraq, will not satisfy the interests of the people living in Iraq nor the other states in the region. More importantly, it is unlikely to produce a degree of stability and territorial control that is "good enough" to satisfy US interests and the obligation to provide an improved environment following the invasion.

This is because the geography in Iraq is inherently unstable. In the long-term, Iraq will probably not survive intact. Additionally, either outcome is counter to the aspirations of the various people who live in the territory of Iraq. It is and will continue to produce an environment ripe for meddling by outside actors, both state and non-state. A strategy that accepts a different outcome will almost certainly not produce additional risk and arguably will reduce risk.

The long and complex history of the region is relevant and important. It has shaped the perceptions of the inhabitants of the region and provides a broad outline of what solutions might be viable. Of particular relevance is the history beginning with the decline of the Ottoman Empire forward. World War I was a seminal event for the region which precipitated the current unstable environment that is Iraq. Subsequently, the events following the first Gulf War have further encouraged conditions very favorable to the disintegration of Iraq.

The Kurds of northern Iraq aspire to independence. Being pragmatic, they may remain within Iraq at the insistence of the United States and the international community. However, they will not give up on their ultimate goal. The region will remain inherently unstable and prone to exploitation by neighboring states and non-state actors until the Kurds of northern Iraq are allowed to pursue their own independent path. The people that live in northern Iraq have sufficient geography, population, resources, and infrastructure to be a viable independent entity. The region's economy is already oriented toward and linked to the west via Turkey. An independent state comprising the predominately Kurdish areas of northern Iraq would tend toward stability and a western orientation.

The counter-arguments all center on the issue of Kurdish irredentism. However, this perceived threat is exaggerated. There has never been an instance where the extended groups of people that self-identify as Kurds have acted in concert. Differences in tribal identity, localized self-interest, and language have inhibited collective action. Ironically, Turkey, the leading source of the irredentist argument, would ultimately benefit the most from such a state. From a security and stability standpoint, there would be new incentive on both sides of the border to eliminate PKK terrorist activity in the territory of northern Iraq. There would also be passive influences that would encourage the PKK to wither into irrelevancy. Economically, Turkey

would gain as the natural economic outlet for a prosperous northern Iraq. In reality, Turkey has long seen this as a possible outcome. Ankara has pragmatically maintained open lines with the leaders of both Iraqi Kurdish groups in northern Iraq and over the last few years Turkish investment and commercial ties to the region have expanded and deepened.

Any discussion of Kurdish independence is, in effect, a discussion about the bifurcation of the territory of Iraq. Even with the removal of the Kurdish areas, the predominately Arab people living in southern Iraq have sufficient geography, population, resources, and infrastructure to be a viable independent entity. Opponents raise the specter of a "Shi'a" state in control of the southern oil fields serving as a willing partner in Iran's quest for regional hegemony. This completely ignores the fact that the current territory of Iraq already has a large Arab majority that happens to be Shi'a. Under every realistic scenario for power sharing within Iraq, the Arabs who happen to be Shi'a will come to dominate whatever government is developed. Legalistic and political maneuvering to limit such an outcome will continue to create an environment of instability and ultimately fail. Such efforts push the Arabs who happen to be Shi'a into seeking external support, primarily from Iran.

However, there is no legitimate reason to fear an Arab state that happens to be lead by a Shi'a majority. Ethnicity is a much stronger and closer held element of self-identification than religious sect in the region. The majority of the people of southern Iraq see themselves first as Arabs and second as Shi'a. Even if this were not true, theological divisions within the Shi'a community divide rather than unite Iraqi and Iranian Shi'a. The behavior of the population of southern Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War more than confirms this point. It is reasonable to expect that absent distorting outside influences, they will continue to follow that path.

Left to their own devices, a predominately Arab state in the territory of southern Iraq would naturally gravitate toward Jordan and the Arab states of the Gulf due to shared ethnicity, history, language, and culture. The economy would also be oriented toward and linked to the west via the other oil producing Arab states.

Absent the current efforts to dampen Arab Shi'a ascendancy in the running of the state, interest in and willingness to accept aid from Iran would evaporate. Such aid comes with strings that the Arabs of Iraq would prefer not to accept. An independent state comprising the predominately Arab areas of southern Iraq would tend toward stability and a western orientation.

Accepting Kurdish independence in northern Iraq and the resulting Arab state in southern Iraq would create an inherently more stable environment that would be less susceptible to outside influence. It would satisfy the interests of the people living in those portions of Iraq and the interests of the United States. It would ultimately prove to be advantageous to US partners in the region, Turkey, Israel, and the Arab States and to further isolate the US adversaries of Syria and Iran.

From those conclusions come the following six recommendations. The first and most critical recommendation is to rise above short-term concerns, both domestic and international, and focus on what is in the long-term best interest of the United States. In that context, US interests can be more clearly seen. It is in the long-term best interest of the United States and its regional allies, and also in keeping with US obligations and ideals, to overtly support the disintegration of Iraq and the creation of two independent states, one north and one south, along predominately ethnic lines.

The second recommendation is to focus on the region as a whole and not on the individual states. From this perspective, it is possible to view ongoing events with a more

critical eye. Larger, regional politics become clear and the myths of monolithic Kurdish and Shi'a identity exposed. Regional stability, a vital US interest, is more likely to be achieved without the current baggage associated with an unproductive insistence on maintaining current state boundaries.

The third recommendation is to accept that the current policies which are being held up as success stories in Iraq are almost exclusively at the regional and the local level. They are working toward the eventual dissolution of Iraq by strengthening local and regional organizations, institutions, and processes. This is actually a very positive, though unintended, development that supports the most probable and advantageous outcome. The United States should actively seek to facilitate this process by adjusting the overarching desired end-state to take advantage of this success.

The fourth recommendation is to accept that not all instability is bad. This proposed course will most probably generate a period of instability within the territory of Iraq. However, that must be weighed against the current situation, which is also fraught with instability without discernable progress. The instability associated with an unstable Iraq disintegrating into ultimately more stable base elements is not only preferable, but a productive regional development.

The fifth recommendation is to actively avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. While tempting in the short-term, it is counter-productive for the United States to attempt to dictate to the people of the region. The history of the region since World War I shows how treacherous such a course can be. The interests of the United States are broad and are served by the creation of stable and secure territories within the geography of Iraq. This can be achieved with significant latitude for local input and decision making to affect the final outcome. Encourage

referendums and incorporate their decisions. For example, the referendum on Kirkuk, provided for in the Iraqi Constitution, is long overdue.

The sixth recommendation is to insist that long-standing disputes within the territory of Iraq are actively resolved and, when necessary, properly funded and implemented. The limbo such situations create must not be allowed to fester indefinitely as they provide fertile terrain for instability. From a US perspective, the nature of the resolution is less relevant than the presence of a resolution. It would prove more advantageous to promote local forums to address open issues, and assist in implementing the results. Again, it is ill advised to try and decide the details or dictate the outcomes. Rather, we should allow the people of the region, who must live with the results, to determine the specifics.

Ultimately, the United States has four vital interests in the Middle East: ensuring the unfettered flow of petrochemicals onto the world market; supporting our friends and allies; increasing regional stability; and deepening western-oriented free-market economic development. US strategy, and the ends, ways, and means to achieve that strategy, must be flexible and support achieving those interests. Iraq will probably not survive, and facilitating its natural bifurcation will come closer to achieving US interest than the current strategy.

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